Alcohol, tobacco age to rise to 21 under proposed law | News Extra

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THE Government is proposing to raise the legal age for alcohol and tobacco from 18 to 21, while the minimum age for cannabis and gambling would rise to 25.

Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar announced the proposed changes in a social media post ahead of legislation expected to be brought to Parliament on Wednesday.

The proposed amendments would affect the Dangerous Drugs Act, Registration of Clubs Act, Tobacco Control Act, Children Act, Liquor Licences Act, Gambling (Gaming and Betting) Control Act and Cannabis Control Act.

Under the proposal, the minimum legal age for the sale, purchase, possession or consumption of alcohol and tobacco would increase from 18 to 21.

For cannabis, the proposed minimum age would increase from 18 to 25.

The minimum permissible age for gambling would also be raised to 25.

Persad-Bissessar said the measures were intended to strengthen protections for young people from the effects of substance use and gambling.

She said the Government was seeking to “strengthen the framework of protection” afforded to young people and described the proposed increases as deliberate measures aimed at reducing exposure to substances and gambling at younger ages.

The proposed cannabis and gambling age limits represent a change from the position outlined by the Prime Minister in the House of Representatives in January.

At that time, Persad-Bissessar said the Government intended to increase the legal age for alcohol and tobacco from 18 to 21, cannabis from 18 to 21, and gambling from 21 to 25.

In June, she again told Parliament that legislation providing for increases in the age limits for ganja, alcohol and gambling was among the Government's planned legislative measures.

The Government's latest proposal would therefore take the cannabis age five years above the current 18-year threshold, while the gambling proposal would establish 25 as the minimum age.

The proposed changes would have to go through the parliamentary process before becoming law.

The Prime Minister said the Government's intention was to safeguard the health, welfare and future of young people and to reduce the potential harms associated with early exposure to alcohol, tobacco, cannabis and gambling.

The proposed legislation is expected to be introduced in the House on Wednesday.